

CHAPTER X.  

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The campaign of 1864 in the Valley of Virginia was marked with acts of barbarism and savage cruelty on the part of the enemy such as history scarcely parallels. In years long past the American heart was wont to burn with righteous indignation at the recital of the wrongs of Poland and Hungary, but then Russia and Austria were but in their rudiments, and it was reserved for the American Government to reduce barbarity to a science, to substitute the torch for the sword, murder for honorable warfare, and to elevate the incendiary's crime to the dignity of national policy.

Having failed to subdue the men of the South in the field, the soldiers of the Federal Army, with such vast odds in their favor of numbers and resources, and the whole world open to them and contributing immensely both of men and means — the Federal soldier, with all these advantages, descended to make mean war upon women and children and dumb brutes, seeking in the sufferings of these helpless victims the victory elsewhere denied them.

General Grant ordered that the Valley should be so devastated "that a crow flying over it should be obliged to carry its rations." And faithful and vigorous were the efforts made to carry out that policy. Acting under these orders from official headquarters, Sheridan's army in the Valley of Virginia obscured the light of day and illuminated the darkness of night with the smoke and flames of the conflagration that devoured alike the dwelling and the stable, the barn and the mill, stored with hay and grain, and the yet ungathered crops standing on the ground. For two weeks and more did their fires fiercely burn while the brave officers commanding this corps of incendiaries made report of their noble achievements, and the nation applauded.

The beautiful residence of Edmund J. Lee, a near relative of the great Southern chieftain, was invaded before daylight one morning by a Captain Martindale, who ruthlessly turned the family, consisting of three or four females, out of the house and set fire to it. In vain Mr. Lee's young and beautiful daughter pleaded with Martindale to save her piano, and when, at the risk of her life, the house all in flames, she rushed into it to secure some necessary clothing, as she reached the door on her return the little she had saved was ruthlessly torn from her by Martindale's order and cast back into the burning building. And so was served the homes of the Honorable Alexander R. Boteler and Andrew Hunter and hundreds of others by Hunter's and Sheridan's orders, and still the Northern people held up their hands in horror when Chambersburg was burned in just retaliation.

General Hunter, whose chief monument was the smoke from the Virginia